

## Daily Correspondence Expectations

### Ecology Managers and Employees

#### All Program Managers:

- Will establish a correspondence review process for their program.
- Are accountable for the quality and timeliness of their program's correspondence.

#### All Employees will:

- Use the six writing rules in their letters, memos, and e-mail messages.
- Use their program's review process before sending any correspondence.

### Six Writing Rules

#### 1. Answer the question that's been asked.

After you write your response, read the incoming letter again to make sure you answered the question(s).

#### 2. Use clear language.

- Write in the active voice.
- Use words the reader knows.
- Avoid in-house jargon and acronyms.
- Take out unnecessary words.

#### 3. Summarize the background information.

Don't include every date and decision when you describe a problem or long-standing issue. A summary is better, unless you need documentation for legal reasons.

#### 4. Organize your message.

- Present information in a logical order.
- Decide where to put the most important information.
- Put details in an attachment or use a hyperlink to give the reader more information.

#### 5. Use a professional, yet empathetic tone.

When you need to deliver bad news, comment on a sore subject, or clear up a misunderstanding, be firm, but polite and empathetic. Do not answer, point-by-point, every criticism the writer has leveled at you, the project, or the agency.

#### 6. Write short sentences.

Aim for a maximum of 17 to 20 words in a sentence.

### How To Set Up Your Page

All agency letters and memos should appear in a consistent style:

- One inch margins on the left and right
- Right margin not justified
- Single space
- Font: 12 pt. Times New Roman or 11 pt. Arial

Follow the Washington State Correspondence Guidelines at <http://swwa.gov/correspondence/wastate/> and the Gregg's Reference Manual – Tenth Edition.

*Need help? Contact your Section Secretary or a Plain Talk Team Member.*

# Executive Correspondence

## Director's Expectations

### Ecology Program and Administrative Managers and Special Assistants:

- Are accountable for the quality and timeliness of all Executive Correspondence in their program.
- Will review all Executive Correspondence in their program. Managers can delegate this responsibility.

### When you write a letter for the Director's or Governor's signature:

- Include contextual sentences early in the letter to ensure the recipient and other readers understand our response, even if they don't have the letter we are responding to. Often, the most important audience for a letter is not the addressee.
- Make sure you have a good understanding of the political issues around the context of the letter before you start to draft a response.
- Answer the question that's been asked.
- Write short and clear sentences.
  - Aim for 17 to 20 words in a sentence and 10 lines of text or less in a paragraph.
  - Get rid of words you don't need.
  - Write in the active voice.
- Minimize acronyms, and never use them without explaining them first.
- Don't use bureaucratic terms. Use words the reader knows, not words only familiar to Ecology.
- Be sure to acknowledge the constituent's efforts or interest in the subject matter.
- Always include contact information for the appropriate staff who can answer more questions.
- Make sure your letter is free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Use a professional tone.
- Follow the Governor's Executive Correspondence Guidelines: <http://swww.wa.gov/correspondence/wastate/default.htm>.

## Process Reminders

- You must submit your draft letter to the Executive Office no later than the "date due" on Ecology's Executive Correspondence Tracking Sheet. Communications Director Dave Workman and Director Jay Manning will then review and edit your letter.
- If you are going to miss the due date, you must contact the Executive Office to let them know and to explain the reason for the delay. They may recommend you prepare an interim letter to let the constituent know you are working on the more substantive response.
- If you respond to Executive Correspondence by phone or e-mail you must send a summary of the conversation or copy of the email to the Executive Office.
- To help the Executive Office track all e-mail messages about a particular letter, the email subject line should include the following information: Exec Corr: Constituent's Last name and first name, ECTS#, Gov Log#. *Example: Exec Corr: Williams, John W 6183 - 616718*
- Always send draft language to the Executive Office in an electronic format and they will route it from there. Do not send drafts directly to Dave, Jay or the Governor's Office.
- Your draft letters must be in a final letter format.
- The Executive Office will send all final letters and will use e-mail to send all in-house ccs. Program assistants will send out all external ccs.
- It is important to tell the Executive Office who will handle Executive Correspondence when your program coordinator is out of the office.

Call (360) 407- 7010 if you have questions.